

COMMISSIONERS APPROVAL

CHILCOTT *aq*

LUND *SA*

THOMPSON *at*

Date.....October 11, 2006

Members Present.....Commissioner Greg Chilcott, Commissioner Betty Lund and Commissioner Alan Thompson

Minutes: Glenda Wiles

The Board met in regard to a memo presented by Administrative Director Skip Rosenthal for costs associated with ballot issues brought forth by the Local Government Study Commission. It was noted there are five recommendations made by the Study Commission which includes going from three Commissioners to five Commissioners, non-partisan elections, four year terms for Commissioners rather than six year terms, voting by district rather than at large and concurrent versus staggered terms of office.

The memo addressed the cost issues that could occur if ballot issues were passed in the upcoming November 7<sup>th</sup> General Election. Skip stated this is the second memo he has generated in regard to costs associated with the proposed changes. This memo is a more comprehensive review of the costs.

Discussion included comments on the Local Government Study Commission's website and voter insert pamphlet which was authored by Chair Alec Sutherland.

Commissioner Chilcott stated the recommendations are more than fiscal. He asked how 'is it good government when the Study Commission does not address the fiscal ramifications of their recommendations'. He also asked how 'is it good government when the voters can not identify who they are voting for (in not knowing their party designation).

Skip then addressed the costs which included adding another Administrative Assistant if five Commissioners are elected, costs for building renovation for two more offices, increased Commissioners salary, benefits, mileage, new computers, phones etc.

I.T. Director Joe Frolich indicated all of the computer equipment comes from Dell.

Special election costs were also discussed if another election is needed. Clerk and Recorder Nedra Taylor was present and indicated elections cost between \$30-40,000.00.

Discussion included the manner in which the Commissioners would fund the changes if they occurred in April 2007. Internal Auditor Klarryse Murphy stated the Commissioners can not raise taxes so the monies would have to come from the general fund. The biggest cost for the county is labor and that is where the Commissioners would need to look if they decided to look for possible cuts.

Commissioner Thompson stated a recent editorial in the Missoulian Newspaper addressed the fact that ten years ago the Missoula City Counsel were elected on non-partisan ballots but it did not work so they went back to partisan elections.

Commissioner Thompson asked Glenda (who is the ex-officio member of the Local Government Study Commission) how the issue of concurrent terms made it to the ballot as a recommendation when it was not part of the formal discussions in public meetings and hearings. Glenda indicated it is important to state that the recommendations made for the ballot were based upon the members of the public who attended the public meetings and sent in their surveys. While many people do not like the option of having five versus three Commissioners, non-partisan versus partisan, four year terms versus six year terms etc., it is wise to remember that the public comment and surveys were consistent in their recommendations to have these issues on the ballot. She stated it is important for those people who did not attend the meetings, and or return their survey forms, or who were in the lower percent of recommendations not making the ballot, to make sure they vote on November 7<sup>th</sup>. In regard to concurrent terms she indicated that recommendation came at the last part of their public discussion and was part of the five Commission District issue supported by Commission Members Vicki Bohlig and Alec Sutherland. She stated neither herself nor Commission Member Howard Anderson were in favor of concurrent terms due to the fact that institutional knowledge is needed when the Board of Commissioners has a turn over. In regard to the issue of County Manager, she stated all Commission Members were in favor of a County Manager and a high percent of the comments made by the public were also in favor of a County Manager. But in order to implement the County Manager form of Government, they would have needed to move to a Charter Form of Government which the Commission Members did not think would pass in an election. Therefore the recommendation of utilizing a County Manager is simply a Supplementary Recommendation made to the Commissioners.

Commissioner Chilcott stated the concurrent terms are not a good idea and the example by our state representatives and Congress is a good example of how inefficient concurrent terms can be.

Skip stated he felt the survey is misleading and he did not like the manner in which it was worded.

Sheriff Chris Hoffman was now present for the discussion and stated his concerns over the financial portion of increasing the number of Commissioners is 'selfish' because he does not have enough money to run his department as it is. He concurred that continuity of government is important and staggered terms work much better than concurrent terms.